

## **The Derry Blues by Matthew9242**

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**Summary:** Thomas Vineyard is a private in the 23rd Maine Infantry, also known as the Derry Blues, during the American Civil War. As the regiment prepares for battle, Thomas knows in the back of his mind that this will not be the first time he has faced danger. As he begins to remember the events of his traumatic childhood growing up in Derry, he realizes that the past never really dies...

# 1. Prologue: A Soldier's Recollections

## The Derry Blues

By: Robert M. Farley

Prologue: A Soldier's Recollections

*September 17th 1862, Sharpsburg, Maryland*

Private Thomas Vineyard awoke with a startle at the rattle of equipment and the shouting of his company's Seargent, ordering the men to shoulder their muskets and form up to begin their march. As soon as he regained his senses, Thomas realized that he had drifted into a light sleep while leaning against a tree. His regiment, the 23rd Maine, had been awaiting orders to move forward and join the battle which was sure to come on this September day. Despite the way his breakfast sloshed around in his stomach, Thomas felt that he was ready for the coming engagement, which would be his first as a new soldier in the Union Army of the Potomac.

He was only a young man of 22 years, but he felt older than he should compared to some of his comrades, who were barely 17 or 18. When the war had broken out in the spring and summer of '61, Thomas felt sure that it would not last more than a month or so, and thus he was not among the groups of young men that rushed to enlist in the army. Certainly Thomas loved his Maine homeland, but he wasn't about to rush off to a war that would be over in no time. In his opinion, there was no way that the southern states would be able to win battles against the more populous and industrial North. Besides, he felt that it was his obligation to help his father at the family's homestead in Derry. His father William had needed the help after Thomas' mother had passed away three years earlier. However, the battles in Virginia during 1861 had gone badly for the Union armies and as Thomas and his father celebrated Christmas that December, the war was still far from decided.

Sitting beside the warm fire with his father on Christmas Eve, Thomas brought up the war and proceeded to inform his father that he intended to enlist in January of '62. William was a bit saddened,

but agreed that Thomas had a duty to serve his country and especially Maine in this time of crisis and rebellion. And so with it decided, Thomas went to the local recruiting office on Neibolt Street in Derry about two weeks later and enlisted as a private in Company B of the 23rd Maine. The path to war had begun for young Thomas, and as he mounted his horse and rode off to the recruiting office to receive his uniform and equipment, he wondered if he would ever see his home in Derry again.

## 2. Chapter 1: Present And Past

### Chapter 1: Present And Past

... "Get your slothful asses up and stand to attention!"

... "Form up in line of battle and shoulder arms!"

Thomas suddenly snapped back from his trailing thoughts and did as Seargent Prescott ordered without delay. Thomas and his comrades of company B stood in two ranks with their muskets shouldered and faced straight ahead as Seargent Prescott's gravelly and hoarse voice thundered through the early morning air. Seargent Prescott was certainly an imposing man, standing right at six feet tall and with a weathered and roughly bearded face that gave assurance that he was not a man to be trifled with. He was a professional soldier, and had been in the regular army before the outbreak of the war. Thomas feared him, but also had a respect and trust for him, because he knew that Seargent Prescott would never cower or abandon his men in the heat of battle. But there was something else about Seargent Prescott that sent chills down Thomas' spine, and it was Sergeant Prescott's voice itself- Thomas could not be certain of the source, but in his mind he knew that he had heard a voice very similar to that in his childhood.

Thomas suddenly realized how little of his childhood that he could remember, and it was almost eerie how much he had forgotten. But one thing he could never forget was that voice-that gravelly, nasty voice that caused him to feel a chill even thinking of it. But what was it about that voice that caused him fear and unrest? That he couldn't determine, but he knew *someone* who might remember- Franklin Denbrough, another man about his age who was also in Company B. Franklin and Thomas had known each other their entire lives and had grown up together as friends in Derry. It was strange, Thomas could remember growing up with Franklin and their friendship, but a lot of the particular events of their childhood he could not remember. Maybe Franklin *you will float down here child* would know more details, and hopefully so because Thomas had a strange feeling that something terrible had occurred in Derry when they were children.

Thomas now began to realize that his memory was like a fog that hadn't yet lifted and it frightened him to know that this mental fog would rapidly dissolve as he remembered more, and he wasn't sure he would like what was stored away in the recesses of his mind. Franklin would know more certainly... that is if they both survived this coming battle...

### 3. Chapter 2: The Cornfield

#### Chapter 2: The Cornfield

...*"Fix bayonets!"* ,Seargent Prescott's voice roared as the men quickly did as ordered. As Thomas looked behind himself for Franklin in the second rank, he flinched as he felt the rumble and concussion of distant artillery fire. Thomas spotted Franklin in the rear rank about a dozen feet to his right and gave him a quick nod. The continued rumble of artillery fire meant that this battle was surely underway to the front of the 23rd Maine. Thomas breathed in deep as Seargent Prescott continued to give orders,

...*"Shoulder Arms!"* ,Seargent Prescott shouted.

...*"Front rank, charge bayonet!"* , and with that order, Thomas and the rest of the men in the front rank thrust their muskets in the forward position with bayonets in the front.

...*"Forward March!"* ,Seargent Prescott's voice ripped through the early morning air like a deadly cannonball, and with that, all 416 men of the 23rd Maine began to march forward in their two ranks across the open field. Seargent Prescott marched before them shouting orders and waving his saber above his head. The color bearer and drummer boy were at his side, the Maine flag wafting in the light breeze and the drum rolling in cadence. Before them, the ground sloped ever so slightly before it tapered off and lead towards a dense cornfield where the rebel army surely awaited them.

The cornfield ahead was blanketed in smoke from the battle already commenced within. As Thomas marched forward, he began to be overwhelmed by the awful noises coming from the cornfield- men screaming and cursing, volleys of musket fire, and the incessant cries and moans of the wounded and dying. Most other men only experienced such things in combat, but Thomas was continuing to gain the realization that he had already experienced sheer terror as a young boy years ago. The memories would surely *[pitiful worm!]* continue to come forward even as Thomas was fully focused on simply surviving this battle. The men now marched into the rows of corn stalks, their bayonets glinting in the sun like polished silver. As

they moved forward deeper into the cornfield, the men began *[I am the destroyer of all you love!]* to come upon the dead and wounded men from the Union brigade that had already passed through here. The sight was horrible, with bodies strewn in every conceivable position, many with limbs missing. *[I will devour your hopes and joy just as I will devour your flesh!]* The soil in the cornfield was soaked in blood and strewn around were arms, legs, and heads, in addition to the mangled corpses. It made Thomas feel sick, but in a way he knew that his childhood had contained even more grotesque horror, and he genuinely feared those long-buried memories just as much as this battle.

Suddenly, a rattling boom of musket fire brought Thomas back to the present situation. Seargent Prescott ordered the regiment to halt and take aim. Thomas felt his heart thumping in his chest as he aimed his musket forward. As Seargent Prescott gave the order to fire, Thomas felt his finger squeeze the trigger and his shoulder shudder with the recoil. His ears were ringing with the deafening sound of the musket volley unleashed by the 23rd Maine. Seargent Prescott then gave the order to reload, and as he did so, Thomas could hear in front of him what sounded like a mix between an Indian war whoop and a Banshee squall. A chill ran up his spine as he realized that this was the feared rebel yell that he had heard of from the stories of the more veteran soldiers in the regiment who had been in combat. It somehow frightened Thomas even more that he could not yet see the enemy soldiers due to the smoke that hovered in the cornfield like death's own blanket.

Suddenly another volley sounded in the air, this time from the direction of the enemy, and Thomas heard the whizzing sounds of fired bullets fill the air like angry hornets. He then heard screaming as the bullets began to find their marks and men began to fall. It was ironic in a way thought Thomas, they were in a cornfield, and here he watched as his comrades were falling to the ground much like corn stalks being chopped down by a farmer's scythe. Thomas glanced at Seargent Prescott and saw in horror that he clutched at his throat, which was spraying blood from a mortal wound. And with that, Seargent Prescott slumped to the ground in an eternal sleep from which he would never wake.

The horrible storm of combat was disorienting to Thomas, as was the incredible noise of the combined mixture of musket fire and the moans and cries of dying men. He saw the regiment's drummer, a boy of no more than 12, laying on the ground with half of his head blown off and bits of brain exposed. The regiment's color bearer was sitting cross-legged on the ground holding up the flag by the pole with his right arm, but did not seem to care that his left arm had been shot off just below the elbow. Men lay strewn along the ground with horrible wounds that spurted fresh blood. The air was filled with the scents of smoke, gunpowder, and the unmistakable coppery smell of blood. The smell of blood was nothing *[I will hunt you as a predator hunts it's prey, weak child!]* new to Thomas, as it was a smell he knew well from his childhood in Derry, but how exactly? He certainly had no time to think of such things right now! But surely soon he would remember...

The men continued to load and fire as best they could, while a few threw down their weapons and ran as fast as they could for the rear. And then came another volley from the enemy and the whizzing of more bullets again filled the air. Thomas suddenly felt a searing pain and forceful blow in his leg that made him feel as if he had been kicked by a mule. He looked down and saw blood gushing down his leg and realized that he had been wounded by a bullet that had struck just above his left knee. He collapsed to the ground and rolled over on his back, staring up at the hazy sky with the sun beaming down stagnant heat. And as the noise of battle around him began to seem farther away and the pain in his leg became more dull, Thomas began to feel sleepy. He felt the memories of his childhood coming forward as from a dream, and the chaos of the cornfield became more distant...



## 4. Chapter 3: A Past Rediscovered

### Chapter 3: A Past Rediscovered

...*"Wake up Thomas! Your father needs you today to help chop and haul wood!"* , at this early hour the sound of his mother's voice grated at Thomas' eardrums like a tine fork over porcelain. He awoke in a startle and saw no light spilling through the window of his room, meaning that dawn had not yet broke. Even for a boy of only 10 who was full of energy, Thomas did not like to be awoken before the sun had come up, but he knew that it was no use to argue. It was late September and the weather was turning colder, which meant it was time for Thomas to go with his father down to the Barrens to chop and haul wood that would be used for their family's winter supply of firewood. They spent about a week every autumn chopping wood and hauling it back to the cabin the family had at the outer edge of the Barrens. It was a grueling task, but it gave Thomas a chance to spend time with his father, which was always a positive for him. Thomas got out of bed and dressed quickly, filled a small sack with some salt pork and a couple of apples, and walked outside to meet up with his father.

*"There you are Thomas, did you rest well?"* his father asked as he checked the blade of the axe for nicks and burrs.

*"I suppose so father, can I do half of the chopping this year? I've gotten much stronger since last time."* Thomas asked with hope in his voice, as more chopping might mean less lifting and loading of the wood into their horse-drawn cart.

His father chuckled, *"maybe a bit of chopping, but certainly not half. You're a growing boy Thomas, but you aren't that grown. Not to worry however, in the next few years you will be doing just as much chopping as me. Now let's get going before the sun comes up."* and with that, his father put the axe in the back of the cart and hitched the cart to Samson, the family's large and strong mule. After a final check to make sure they had everything they needed, Thomas and his father set off for the Barrens.

The walk from their cabin at the outer edge of the Barrens down into

the thickest tangles of trees, bushes and ferns where they would chop wood was not a long walk in distance, but it was time consuming due to the sheer roughness of the terrain. The name did not fit this area well, as the Barrens were so full of trees and brush that it was almost impassable in certain places. Thomas' father kept Samson and the cart on the small dirt paths that snaked through the Barrens, while he and Thomas carefully made their way through the tangles of greenery in search of suitable small trees and logs to chop. As they worked, father and son carried on conversation to pass the time. Usually their conversations were cheerful and warm, but today Thomas' father had something grave and serious to talk about.

As they came to a somewhat large log on the ground and prepared to chop it into smaller pieces, Thomas' father began... *"Thomas, have any of your friends around town told you anything about what happened to the young Townsend boy?"* Thomas hesitated, and said *"only that he was found killed near the Kenduskeag, probably by a bear. Why do you ask father?"* Thomas now turned to face his father, who had stopped chopping. *"Well Thomas, you should know that the boy was terribly mutilated. Indeed, it may have been some sort of animal, but I have a small feeling that it may be more sinister. How so exactly, I'm not sure, and that feeling may just be my mind playing tricks on me. Now, that isn't intended to make you afraid, only to make you more aware of your surroundings. It may be 1850, and Derry is certainly much more settled and civilized than in years past, but bears and wolves and other wild animals still roam these woods. And I know you like to play down here at times, but the Barrens can still be dangerous Thomas. Just remember that, and remember to pay attention to your surroundings at all times when you are alone. What happened to the Townsend boy is...horrible to say the least. His mother and father are grieving terribly, and it's not a pain I would wish upon a worst enemy. Listen and take heed to what I've just told you Thomas."* Looking up at the seriousness of his father's face, Thomas felt a chill run down his back and squeaked, *"yes s-sir"*. And with nothing else to be said, they continued on with their work.

They worked for the next few hours chopping logs and small trees until they had filled the cart to the top with wood suitable for burning. Around 10 that morning, they sat down to eat the food Thomas had brought. They shared the piece of salt pork, and had an apple each to hold them over until they got back home to have a

proper lunch with mother. All morning, Thomas had pondered what his father had told him about the Barrens being dangerous. It was a bit unnerving to Thomas, for he had played in the Barrens for as long as he could remember but he never thought about the dangers the woods could hold. He knew to be careful about wild animals, but there was something about the way his father mentioned something possibly being more sinister out there that really gave him chills. Thomas reasoned with himself that it was probably just his father trying to scare him into being more alert and careful.

After they finished eating, it was time to gather everything up and head home. As they were walking along one of the dirt paths that snaked through the Barrens, Thomas had a feeling that he could not explain. His father was walking out in front beside Samson, who was pulling the cart of wood. Thomas walked beside the cart along the path, and that's when he heard the voice whisper... "*Thomas*"...

He stopped and listened, and then looked toward his father and said, "*yes father?*" His father turned around with a questioning look on his face and said, "*I didn't say anything Thomas*". Thomas had a quizzical look on his face, but he decided not to press the matter any further, even though he knew he had heard someone call his name. They continued along the path back toward home, but on several instances Thomas could have sworn he heard what sounded like the jingle of small bells, and also a raspy, throaty laugh from somewhere behind him.

## **5. Chapter 4: More Disappearances**

### **Chapter 4: More Disappearances**

As the days and weeks went on and the weather continued to turn colder, Thomas settled into his usual routine of helping his father around the homestead and spending his mornings and early afternoons in his classes at the Derry Schoolhouse. It was hard to act like everything was normal though, because more local children had either gone missing or been found dead. Of course, almost a dozen children had gone missing from last summer until now, but 7-year old Peter Townsend was the first to be found dead. He had last been seen heading for the banks of the Kenduskeag stream to look for crayfish, and that was where he was found the next day, torn apart and partially eaten by some unknown animal. The other children were assumed to be runaways, but the remains of the Townsend boy were a sign to those who paid attention, a sign that Derry's youth were not safe from harm. It had caused the parents in Derry to be more watchful of their children, and Thomas' mother and father were no exception. Thomas was not to walk home from school by himself anymore because his father picked him up and walked him home everyday, and he was no longer allowed to play by himself in the Barrens. It was for good reason, because over the last month, four more children were found dead in different parts of the Barrens, and they had all been horribly mutilated by some unknown assailant.

It started on September 3rd, just a day after Thomas and his father made the trip to chop wood. A local woman, Ms. Evans, was on an afternoon walk when she spotted a severed foot along the bank of the Canal, which was the part of the Kenduskeag River which passed through the town center of Derry. Horrified, she reported it to the town Marshal and at that point the subsequent investigation revealed that the severed foot belonged to a young child, and a further search led to the remains of a child, later confirmed to be 9-year old Daniel Wilson. The remains were found just within the Barrens near Pasture Road. His parents reported that he had left for school that day just like always, but he never arrived at school. It was speculated that he had been killed near the Canal and dragged under the water until the body washed out in the Barrens. It could not be speculated whom or

what had attacked him. His parents were devastated and went to stay with family in Bangor, donating their possessions to the local church and sold their home near Witcham Street to the Derry Town Council.

Two days later on September 5th, 8-year old Nicholas Robertson was found decapitated next to a tree less than 100 yards from where the Wilson boy was found. In addition to missing the head, the legs of the body also appeared to have been partially eaten, as the left leg was stripped of its flesh and muscles down to the bone. The Robertson boy was determined to have been the victim of an attack by an unknown animal, possibly a bear or a bobcat. The boy was survived by his father, 49-year old Samuel Robertson, who was Derry's chronic town drunk. He committed suicide a week later by hanging himself.

On September 19th, 11-year old Billy Drake and his younger brother 10-year old Timothy Drake were reported missing by their parents after they did not return home from school. Their school teacher reported that the brothers had been in classes that day as normal and were headed down Jackson Street back toward their house. Their bodies were found by railroad workers arriving for the early shift the next morning at the Derry Train Yard. The scene was one of horror, as the boys had both been torn to pieces and their remains were scattered around a 50 square foot area in the dirt lot near the edge of the train yard. The attack was determined to have taken place in the late afternoon, leading the town Marshal and his deputy to believe that the boys had been kidnapped somewhere between the schoolhouse and their house sometime after school had been dismissed for the day, and had been held by their kidnapper until early evening, where they were most likely taken to the Train Yard and killed. What further troubled and confounded the investigators was the fact that the remains of both boys appeared to have been partially eaten in addition to being mutilated. After the discovery of the remains of the Drake brothers, a wave of fear and foreboding gripped the population of Derry. It was now evident that something far more sinister was taking place than simple animal attacks.

The common element of all of the deaths was the fact that not one person reported seeing or hearing anything at all out of the ordinary.

## **6. Chapter 5: Nightmares Of Revelation**

### **Chapter 5: Nightmares Of Revelation**

After the murders of the Drake brothers that brought the body count to four dead children in just over two weeks, Derry was polarized in fear of what had happened and also what was still to come. To a traveler passing through the town, Derry would have appeared to be a ghost town of sorts. For a week after the latest deaths, the schoolhouse was closed and parents kept their children indoors at all times for the most part. As it was, Thomas stayed inside mostly and helped his mother clean and keep the family cabin in order. Normally he would not have been asked to do what was at the time considered women's work, but the situation of missing and dead children had necessitated that all precautions were taken. Thomas was not allowed to go anywhere by himself, and he went with his father whenever they had to go into town for anything. His father also began to carry a double-barrel shotgun slung over his shoulder at all times. To say that everyone in Derry was on edge was certainly an understatement.

Late one night while Thomas was tossing and turning in his sleep, he had a nightmare related to the events happening in Derry. The nightmare, or perhaps more accurately a vision, revealed the culprit that was terrorizing and killing the children of Derry. In the dream, Thomas awoke in his room to the sounds of bumping and muffled sounds and voices coming from his parent's room which was beside his room. He quietly got up and opened the door to his parent's room just a slight bit, and he saw a scene that immediately turned every drop of blood in his body ice cold. His mother was sitting on the bed in the nude on her hands and knees with her head in the lap of a man who was not his father. It was the sight of the man that drew Thomas' attention. The man sitting on the bed with his mother appeared to be a circus clown. The clown was very tall and his boot-clad feet hung over the edge of the bed and his frame filled the side of the bed he was on. He wore a white jumpsuit with red trim, similar to what a circus clown or a jester would wear, and around his neck was a large ruffled whitish-colored collar. His face was painted white with red lips and a red nose, and red lines ran from the corners of his lips up the sides of his face to just above his eyes. His hair was

an reddish-orange color and it was situated in wavy tufts along the sides and back of his head, and his forehead was somewhat large and not covered with hair. As Thomas continued to stare he realized that his mother did not just have her head on the clown's lap, but that she was performing some type of lewd sexual act on the clown which Thomas had no knowledge of. She had the clown's penis in her mouth and was gagging and slurping on it as if she was starving with hunger and it was some kind of delicious food. Thomas felt tears streaming down his face and turned away, feeling sick to his stomach and not wanting to look anymore. When he finally looked back, the scene had changed somewhat. The woman on the bed was no longer his mother, but now appeared to be an old woman with leprosy or some other horrible skin disease. The old hag was covered in large sores and scabs that oozed a yellowish pus that had the smell of rotting meat and feces. The old woman continued to slurp on the clown's privates with eagerness, but the clown itself had also changed. Its jumpsuit, collar, and face were smeared with drying blood and its mouth was stretched and open very wide to reveal a set of huge white razor-sharp teeth. The clown laughed in a ragged and throaty tone and spoke to Thomas...

"Little Thomas, little weak and insignificant Thomas, look now upon the face of the harvester of souls! I have many names, as many as there are grains of sand on a seashore. This mask which you look upon now is the one I use most often when I hunt my prey, and as such, you will know me by the name of Pennywise The Dancing Clown. I am the Eternal Destroyer and Devourer of all that you love, little insignificant worm! You are my prey, just like all the others, and soon your flesh will fill my belly and your entrails will wrap around my fingers just as my presence wraps around this town! There is no use to run and try to hide, for it will do you no good- I am eternal, child! I am the eater of worlds, and of children! And you will be next little Thomas!"

And with that, the clown leaned its head back and unleashed a horrific and cackling laugh that pierced Thomas' eardrums like hot needles. The old woman on the bed laughed and pointed at Thomas, and as she sat up on the bed and stared at him, he was sickened even further to see her diseased and sore-covered mouth open to reveal rotten brown teeth and a very long and swollen tongue that unrolled

out of her mouth like a rug. Also out of her mouth spilled a flood of stinking vomit that contained a large amount of ticks, beetles, and maggots. The smells in the room were as unbearable as the awful vision he had seen, and with that Thomas slammed the door shut with all of the force he could muster.

The sound of the door slamming snapped Thomas awake, and as he sat up and looked around his room, he realized that he was safe in his own bed and everything was back to normal. He got up and went to his parent's room to check, and sure enough his father and mother were just fine and fast asleep. As he laid back down in bed and closed his eyes, he could still hear the awful laughing of the monstrous and evil clown...



## **7. Chapter 6: Solace In Friendship**

### **Chapter 6: Solace In Friendship**

After having the nightmare which seemed so real, Thomas began to be consumed with the fear and mystery of the evil clown monster and it's hold over Derry. He was also starting to wonder if the nightmare was somehow more than just something he dreamed, because the next day he could still smell the putrid and acidic odor from the old woman's vomit in the hallway outside his parent's room. Thomas did not know who exactly he could talk to about his experience, as he knew his mother and father would not believe him. He had an idea of someone he could ask though- his friend Franklin Denbrough, who he had not seen for a week since school had been shut down. But as fate would have it, Thomas and his father and mother were due to make a trip to the Denbrough Farm the next day. His father and Mr. Denbrough had arranged to make a two-day trip to Bangor to a horse auction, and the boys would stay at the Denbrough's farmhouse with their mothers. It would be Thomas' chance to confide in Franklin what had happened in his nightmare.

The farm itself was on the northeastern edge of Derry, near where the Canal that passed through the town drained into the Penobscot River. The farm was once a sprawling tract of land a few generations before, but over the years the Denbrough family had downsized the property by selling off tracts of the land to the Derry Town Committee. Franklin had told Thomas on several occasions that when the time came for him to inherit the family farm, that he would sell the rest of it and move to downtown Derry and open a gunsmithing shop on Kansas Street, which was starting to become a profitable business venture for some of Derry's businessmen at the time. It seemed trivial to Thomas for a boy his age to be concerned already with adult affairs, but to each their own, he concluded. After their fathers had loaded up into the Denbrough's wagon and departed, Thomas and Franklin went out to the plot of dirt beside the garden to play a game of horseshoes. Thomas decided to tell Franklin about his nightmare right then, and the seriousness in his eyes were enough to convince Franklin that he was not pulling his leg. Thomas was surprised when Franklin began to tell him of strange things that had been happening

to him as well. With a solemn voice, Franklin began...

"Well, I don't know how to explain it exactly, but I've seen the clown a few times too. Mostly I've seen him in the mornings on the way to school and in the afternoons on the way home. At first it was a little strange, but nothing scary- I would see the clown beside a building or beside a tree, and he would just stand there and wave at me. I always had this feeling that there was something bad about him though. I thought maybe he was just some man that was passing through, like perhaps a traveling circus performer or something of that sort. I didn't get really scared until he called me by name though- one morning I saw him on the way to school and he said my name and told me there was a magic show in the Barrens, and he wanted me to come with him to see it. And Thomas, you know how much I love magic tricks with cards and illusion; I wanted to go with him. But that bad feeling I had about him came back, and I got scared and I took off running and I didn't stop until I got to school. But all of the times I saw him, he never looked horrible or like a monster with sharp teeth, but there was certainly something wrong about him, something very creepy in the way he acted."

Thomas felt relief to know that he was not alone in his fears of the clown, and he said "We're friends Franklin, and we will figure this out together. There must be something about children that the clown likes, and it's obviously bad. I think we now know what has been responsible for kids that have been killed. But how do we keep from ending up like them?"

Franklin said "We don't even know what it is, Thomas. What if it's some kind of monster, and it's right here in Derry? From what you told me about your nightmare, it's obviously more than just a clown. And who knows? Maybe it wanted you to have the nightmare, maybe it somehow arranged it so that you would have the nightmare. And if that's what it did, then it's obviously something that is much more powerful and smart than us, and what is stopping it from getting us anytime it wants? I don't think it's something that we as children can fight, and we certainly can't tell our parents because they will just think we're crazy or possessed. And this...monster is obviously the reason why all of those children disappeared last summer and fall too, and that was about a dozen children, which added to the recent

ones, makes it around 17 dead or missing children. So tell me Thomas, if none of them could manage to live when this monster showed itself, what makes you think that we can do any better?"

Thomas thought about it and said, "Maybe we have an advantage the others didn't- maybe they trusted the clown or they thought he was just a nice man in a clown suit, and he used that to capture them. But we know that he's bad, so maybe we can keep away from him until he goes back wherever he came from. We don't have anything to fight him with, so our best chance is to stay on our guard and stay away from him. School will probably reopen in a couple of days, and when we get back we can warn everyone else in our class. Maybe if everyone avoids the clown, he might get discouraged and leave Derry. I think it's our only chance to keep from getting ourselves killed."

And with that said, the conversation between the two boys was interrupted by their mothers calling them in the house for an early lunch before the afternoon chores began. As they walked back toward the house, Franklin seemed to hesitate. When Thomas looked back and asked him what was wrong, Franklin looked at him with a mixture of fear and resolution, "Thomas I noticed that you keep referring to the clown, or whatever it is, as a he." With a puzzled look, Thomas said, "yeah I guess I do, what's your point?"

Franklin said quietly, "Its not a 'he' or a man..it's a...

it's an IT."

## **8. Chapter 7: A Walk With Death**

### **Chapter 7: A Walk With Death**

For the next two days there was very little that happened out of the ordinary, and for that Thomas and Franklin were grateful. Their fathers had returned from the horse auction empty handed, and Thomas' father had decided that they would stay an extra day with the Denbrough's so he could help Franklin's father chop some firewood to store in preparation for the coming winter. They would set out for the Barrens before sunup the next morning, and Thomas and Franklin volunteered to go with them and help.

The next morning the four of them left with the Denbrough's cart in tow while it was still dark. It was chilly outside but the conversation and chatter between fathers and their sons warmed their souls with laughter and good-natured joking. They walked from the Denbrough's farm through the woods along the bank of the Penobscot River and found a few choice logs to chop up along the way. There was better and more abundant trees to chop in the Barrens however, so the four of them continued on. As they were walking, Thomas and Franklin walked a bit farther back from their fathers so they could talk about the evil clown without being overheard. Thomas whispered to Franklin, "Several times I swear I've felt like Pennywise was watching us, but I didn't see him when I looked around." Franklin glanced over his shoulder and whispered back, "What made you start referring to it by the name it gave you? I assume the damn thing is a monster for what it's been doing to children, so I'm still going to call it an It." Thomas rolled his eyes and answered, "what does it matter what I call it? It told me in my nightmare that one of its names was Pennywise, so I might as well call it by the name it gave me. But either way, I don't think it matters because it's obviously a very bad..whatever it is, and as I said before, our best chance to not end up like the other children is to stay away from it." Franklin nodded and said, "well just stay vigilant and keep your eyes open, it could be anywhere and following us at this very moment for all we know." And so the whispering between the boys dwindled for the time being as they continued on into the Barrens.

As they neared a section of the Barrens along the Kenduskeag Stream, the boy's fathers began to pick out small trees and logs to chop up. The boys helped them load the wood into the cart for awhile, and then asked if they could take a break and go to the stream to skip rocks. They were right near the stream, so their fathers agreed, but told them to stay close and to be aware of their surroundings while they played. A short walk of less than 100 yards led the boys to the Kenduskeag, but when they parted the tree branches beside the stream bank, they froze instantly and their blood ran cold as there was suddenly an unnaturally icy chill in the air. When the boys looked toward the stream, they could hardly believe their eyes.

In the middle of the stream stood Pennywise, staring at the boys with a huge wide grin bearing his razor sharp pointed teeth. Floating in the stream all around him and for as far in either direction as the boys could see, were the bloated and mutilated corpses of children. Franklin and Thomas could only stare as Pennywise pointed at them and cackled with a raspy laugh, and then reached down in the water and picked up one of the floating corpses, eyed it voraciously, and proceeded to take a bite of flesh from the corpse's arm. Thomas felt that he would be sick from watching Pennywise eat and from seeing the strings of flesh hanging from the corners of the clown's mouth and the blood running down its chin. Pennywise looked again at the corpse in his hand, and with a shrug and a laugh he tossed it over his shoulder and back into the stream. Thomas then stared at the corpses of the children, which were floating in the stream much like logs would float as they were sent downriver to a sawmill. Some of the bodies were missing arms and legs, some were missing heads, and some barely looked as if they had once been human at all due to the gruesome nature of their mutilations. Thomas also noticed that the bodies of the children appeared to be dressed in a wide variety of clothes, as he saw corpses clothed in what he could only describe as something that early white settlers would have worn. He also saw what appeared to be the bodies of Indians, or Native American children. And as he looked, Thomas could have sworn he saw corpses of children that he recognized, children that had gone missing last summer and the children found dead this past month. The bodies looked horribly bloated and waterlogged, and many of them had skin that was a greenish tint from decay. The boys diverted their attention back to Pennywise as he began to speak...

"Little Thomas and Franklin, look here at your coming demise! Look at how they all float! And very soon, you'll *FLOAT TOO!*" The clown continued to laugh maniacally and mock the two boys who could only stare in sickened horror as the corpses of the children appeared to be moving. And then the corpses began to rise and stand in the stream with Pennywise, and with the squeaky and gargled voices of life cut short, they began to shout the words of the clown as if they were his puppets. Pennywise and the dead children sounded like Hell's own chorus as they shouted together, "You'll float too..You'll float too..**YOU'LL FLOAT TOO!!**" Thomas looked at Franklin, who was frozen in fear and staring at the macabre display before him. When Thomas looked back toward the stream, he was horrified to see that all of the reanimated corpses of the dead children were now walking through the stream toward the two boys with Pennywise in their midst, ready to add new prey to his collection of death. And then Thomas was snapped out of his trance, and he grabbed Franklin by the arm and pulled him back up the stream bank and into the trees and bushes and the boys started running to escape. They had run only a few feet before they both heard a low chuckle and a feeling of warmth returned. With a quizzical look the boys stared first at each other, and then back towards the Kenduskeag. When they looked back, Pennywise and the corpses of the children were gone and the stream was empty as the normal sounds of nature had resumed. The sounds of birds chirping and the water bubbling by relieved Thomas to know that the horrific episode was over. When he looked back, he saw that Franklin was crying, and with tears streaming down his cheeks he said, "we have no chance to survive this thing, it's nothing but pure evil, and we're nothing but children. It's going to kill us just like it's killed all of the others for who knows how long. I don't want to die!" And then Franklin sat down on a rock and broke down into muffled sobs.

Thomas leaned down to reassure Franklin and said, "we can and we will survive this, it didn't get us before or today, and it won't get us ever. It won't get us because we're not going to give it a chance to catch us alone. Whether it's you and me sticking together or we're with our parents, we will not let ourselves be anywhere alone. I think that's how this thing catches its victims, it lures them away from safety. But if we stick together at all times at school and stick with our parents at home, we won't give it the opportunity to get us. Now

come on Franklin, get yourself together and let's get back before our fathers come looking for us."

Franklin got up and the two boys nodded and shook hands in agreement to the plan, and then they walked back to where there fathers were chopping the wood. When they got back the day's work was finished, so the four of them loaded up the cart and left the Barrens to return home.

## **9. Chapter 8: The Long Cruel Winter**

### **Chapter 8: The Long Cruel Winter**

As the weeks and then the months slowly crawled by, life for Thomas and Franklin and the rest of Derry was rather uneventful for the most part. The snow started to fall in the middle of November and continued off and on through Christmas. With the snow and the extra chill in the air, the sightings of Pennywise lessened and became less frequent. Thomas saw the evil clown smiling and waving at him in the meadow beside the Derry Schoolhouse a couple of times, and Franklin saw the clown one morning out of the corner of his eye while his father walked him to school. But other than that, things were fairly quiet and the people of Derry soon slipped back into their normal routines. The parents of the children still took extra precautions however, and as such, no child was ever left alone or unattended without an adult chaperone. Because of this, there were no more disappearances or murders in Derry for the rest of 1850, and as the new year arrived and everyone in town prepared to welcome the beginning of 1851, Thomas had high hopes that perhaps Derry's long nightmare would at last be over. Along with Franklin, he had warned the other children at school about Pennywise and he had told them what he and Franklin had seen that day on the Kenduskeag Stream, along with all of the other sightings of the evil clown. Some of their classmates were unconvinced and thought the stories were dumb and foolish, but a good deal of others in their class believed the boys and admitted that they had seen Pennywise too. And all of the ones who had seen the clown agreed that there was an inherently evil aura about it.

January of 1851 came with the familiar bone-chilling cold of the Maine winter, and as the inhabitants of Derry prepared for a seasonal blizzard, an icy chill settled over the hearts of the townspeople. It was as if everyone somehow knew that something else terrible was about to happen, and it wasn't long before they were proven correct. On January 7th, the horribly mutilated body of a young girl was found in an empty field just off from Jackson Street. The body was found early in the morning by a town resident, who quickly called the town Marshal and his assistant deputy and an additional



constable to the scene. The only part of the body that was recovered was the torso and the right arm, and it appeared that the child had been voraciously eaten by an unknown attacker. The crime was nearly identical to the string of murders that Derry had suffered the previous year, so it was assumed by everyone that the same unknown culprit was responsible. Due to the extreme damage to the body and because of the fact that all of the children in town were accounted for, the identity of the victim was unable to be determined. It was theorized that the girl may have been a runaway from another town who was just passing through, and was thus an easy target for her attacker. It was determined that the attack had happened at nighttime, and it was quite windy that night. Once again, no one reported seeing or hearing anything out of the ordinary that night, and the howling winds and snow would have made a child's screams inaudible. This most recent murder left a blanket of negativity over the hearts of the townspeople.

A meeting was called with Derry Town Council soon after, and the topic of discussion was the ineffectiveness of the town's law enforcement in guaranteeing the safety of the locals or in apprehending the unknown suspect. It was argued that because city funds and tax dollars were used to pay for the Derry police force, that the money was being wasted due to the ineptitude of the town Marshal. Many citizens felt that the reason for the decline in the murders had been the vigilance of parents keeping a constant eye on their children, rather than anything the Marshal had done. An emergency vote was called, and the result was that the position of town Marshal was liquidated and the police force was to be reorganized. Going forward, the law enforcement of Derry would consist of a single constable and an assistant deputy, with two secretaries to handle the paperwork. Witnesses to the meeting said that the topics of conversation were very heated, and bad feelings and animosity between the parties ran high. The most vocal opponents of the Derry police force were a group of about 20 men led by a local man named John Markson. They announced at the end of the meeting that they would be patrolling the streets of Derry armed with shotguns and long rifles at all times, and that if the unknown murderer showed his face anywhere in town, they would catch him and burn him alive. Markson was viewed as a temperamental and possibly violent ruffian, and as such, the group of men were viewed

by many as a mob, and it was feared that their use of vigilante justice might only make things worse.

As the weeks went by and January gave way to February the mood of the townspeople continued to decline. Neighbors didn't talk and visit with each other like they normally would, families grew apart and husbands spent much more time drowning their problems in drinking and fighting at the local taverns, and even church services on Sundays were unusually somber and cheerless. And the entire time, John Markson and his mob patrolled the streets of Derry in the guise of keeping the town safe, but appearing to onlookers to be behaving more like soldiers from an invading army, as they rarely had a good word for the citizens they said they were protecting. It was as if Derry was being immersed in darkness and hatred more and more by the day, and a warm smile soon became as rare of a sight as a blue moon.

Even the mood of Thomas' schoolmates was noticeably more apathetic and depressing. The only exception was Franklin, who had been the one friend who Thomas felt he could trust and rely on. The other children rarely seemed to laugh and play like they had before, and even the hour of outdoor recreation in the middle of the day seemed almost forced, as if the children had been stripped of their playful and adventurous spirits somehow. Thomas noticed this change, and that was mostly because his own family seemed to not have been as affected by the shift as everyone else had. His mother and father had stayed indoors more due to the winter cold, and it had given the family more time to enjoy each other's company. Thomas felt that somehow this extra time indoors and away from the town had preserved his family's peaceful tranquility. He even noticed that he thought much less about Pennywise and the mysterious nature of the clown's motives, but he remained on the lookout and kept his guard up. He thought that perhaps the reason his family had been spared from the wave of negativity was because their cabin was at the far edge of the Barrens. That was a possibility, because it seemed like the negativity of the townspeople was centered in the middle of Derry. It seemed to Thomas like the town was under some sort of spell that was no doubt the work of Pennywise, and he had the feeling that everything that had transpired was certainly coming to a head. And somehow deep inside, he just knew that Pennywise had

orchestrated and intended it to be that way.

## **10. Chapter 9: The Reaping Of Sorrows**

### **Chapter 9: The Reaping Of Sorrows**

The month of February dragged on slowly in Derry as the overall atmosphere of negativity mixed with the biting cold of winter's fury made everyday life for most of the locals an exercise in quiet misery and suffering. Thomas felt that his circle of trust had dwindled to include only his parents and Franklin, but he was happy to have at least them if nothing else. Franklin and Thomas became inseparable for the most part to the point that Franklin had received permission from his parents to spend a week with Thomas and his family at their cabin. It gave the two boys an opportunity to watch out for each other and keep an eye out for any signs of Pennywise, and luckily for them the sightings of the evil clown had dwindled down greatly. The boys were very concerned however, because they both suspected that Pennywise was plotting and devising his grand appearance. The boys did not know where or when Pennywise would strike again, but they both knew deep down that it would be some kind of animalistic act of violence, and they genuinely feared for their fellow citizens of Derry.

On the night of February 23rd, the town constable was alerted to an incident that was in progress at the Silver Dollar tavern. The constable, a balding man in his 40's named William Grenier, rushed to the tavern with his shotgun loaded and his anger boiling due to the almost nightly fistfights and mischief that had become the pattern for the Silver Dollar. Constable Grenier had grown tired of being the de-facto babysitter of a bunch of brawling drunkards who should have been at home with their families rather than in a grimy tavern. Ever since the Derry Town Council had been influenced by the mob of citizens to reorganize the police force, Grenier and his assistant deputy had been working 12 hour shifts daily and it was starting to take a toll on the mental health and stability of both men. And with John Markson and his mob of vigilantes being so prone to violence towards others, the town's problems only became worse. With no suspects being caught linked to the string of child disappearances and murders, the people of Derry were at the breaking point. Constable Grenier felt a sense of foreboding as he neared the front door of the

Silver Dollar, wondering if tonight would be the incident that caused the powder keg that was the town to explode in terrible violence.

When he walked into the tavern and saw what was unfolding, Constable Grenier immediately drew his shotgun to his shoulder and in a booming voice ordered everyone to halt. Standing at the bar were the two men involved in the confrontation, and sure enough John Markson was one of them. The other man, and the one who drew most of Constable Grenier's attention was a younger and slightly overweight man in his 30's that Grenier recognized as Otis Worthington. Worthington was usually a cheerful and caring man who was well liked in Derry. He was a slow man and a bit mentally retarded, but he excelled in his trade as a carpenter and many families in town had furniture made by him in their homes. But his demeanor on this night was the opposite, as he stood in front of Markson with a revolver pointed at him and a heartbreaking look of fear and sadness on his face. Markson had his hands up but he towered over Worthington with a devilishly cunning and beady look in his eyes that reminded Constable Grenier of the look of a hungry wolf stalking its prey. Around the two men in a loose circle stood the rest of the patrons in the tavern, all with a eager look in their eyes that gave the impression that they were somehow enjoying the situation.

Constable Grenier leveled the shotgun and said, "Alright now Mr. Markson if you don't slowly take three steps back away right this second, I will blow your head in pieces all over the ceiling of this shithole, as God is my witness. Do you understand me? Do I make myself clear?" Markson turned towards the constable with a hardened expression on his face and an evil fire in his eyes, but kept his hands up and said, "Certainly" and with a devilish smile now spreading across his face, he took three steps back away from Worthington. Keeping his eye on Markson, the constable now spoke to Worthington in a gentle tone and said, "okay Otis let's calm down and tell me what's going on. I'm here to help you friend and I need you to be calm and tell me why you are pointing that gun at Mr. Markson." Worthington looked at Constable Grenier with tears in his eyes, and in a stuttering and shaky voice he said, "M-Mr. Markson s-said I was a no good son-of-a-bitch who s-s-should be f-fucked in the ass by a b-big cotton p-pickin' n-ni-nigger. He says t-that my momma w-w-

whores herself o-out to niggers. He says I-I'm nothin' but a d-dirty Sodomite a-and I'm d-d-di-diseased in my head. Said I w-was a piece of r-rat filth and t-that he th-thinks I k-killed all those children. He said only an o-oddball like me c-c-could do it. But I haven't done nothin' M-Mr. Grenier!" And with that, Worthington began to sob even harder.

Constable Grenier turned back to Markson and said in a low but scathing voice, "Mr. Markson, you had best get yourself out of this tavern and back home to your family in a moments haste, and if I catch you or any of your little crusty bitches on the streets of Derry trying to use vigilante justice to intimidate others, I swear to God I'll put all of you under the jail for as long as I please. I enforce the law in this town, not you or your little band of rag-tag pussyfoot bullies. Now all of you will go home and put away your guns and cease and desist from this heathen behavior!" With his words spoken as if they were set in stone, Constable Grenier motioned for John Markson to leave the tavern, and with a huff and a mumbling, Markson complied and departed.

With the sound of Worthington's continued sobbing filling the air, someone from the crowd of patrons exclaimed, "you really going to sympathize with that Sodomite weakling there, constable?" And with that an enormous and howling laughter erupted from the others in the tavern. Constable Grenier scanned the crowd of patrons with disgusted and incredulous eyes, a crowd of men who he knew were normally respectful and honorable, who would not have been the type of men to engage in such foul language and boorish behavior. He scanned the crowd back and forth with his eyes, seeing before him men he had grown up with and had at one time shared friendship with. They were all men he knew well, except for obviously the stranger in the very back. The man in the white jumpsuit and what looked like a large ruffled collar. He appeared to have red hair and a white painted face with red markings. The strange man was all the way in the back and Constable Grenier could barely see him, but he thought for a moment that the man almost looked like a damn circus clown. The constable laughed to himself in a sarcastic manner at the thought, finding it ironic because enforcing the law in Derry was beginning to resemble some kind of twisted and deranged circus. Constable Grenier's attention was quickly drawn

back to Worthington, who now held the revolver to his right temple and continued to shake with sobs.

At the sight of Otis Worthington standing there with a gun to his head and crying, the crowd of patrons erupted in even more laughter, as if they were a flock of demons watching a twisted comedy show on Hell's theater stage. Constable Grenier tried to speak to Worthington, but he felt his voice caught like a lump in his throat. He felt heartbroken for the innocent man standing in front of him being made fun of by a crowd of once honorable men who now resembled maniacal lunatics from the bowels of the darkest pit. He felt disgust and revulsion toward the howling crowd, ashamed that his fellow man could stoop so low to mistreat another man who had never done any of them any harm or meant them any ill-will, a mentally handicapped man who had the innocence of a child. And lastly, he felt a sense of defeat and failure in his duties as the town constable, feeling powerless to stop the depravity and negativity that had swept over Derry like an onrushing tide.

Constable Grenier was startled out of his thoughts as the crowd now began to chant obscenities at Worthington as they continued their maniacal taunting and jeering. They chanted at the top of their lungs, "Sodomite! Sodomite! Sodomite!.." and finally came the breaking point Worthington, who with tears streaming down his face, pulled the trigger and blew his brains out of the side of his head. At the sound of the gunshot, the laughter and chanting instantly ceased, and the only sound in the tavern was that of Worthington's body slumping over on the floor. At that instant, Constable Grenier thought he heard the sound of a satisfied soft moan from a single individual at the very back of the crowd, the type of sound a man makes after he releases his seed in a woman during lovemaking. The constable looked away from the body of Worthington, looked away as a pool of blood began to spread out from what was left of Worthington's head. Constable Grenier slowly looked at the faces of the men in the crowd, seeing looks of shame and disbelief, looks of deep guilt and hurt. And just like that, at the instant Worthington committed suicide, the evil and maniacal depravity that had possessed the crowd evaporated and disappeared like smoke. As Constable Grenier tried to get his composure back and process everything that had happened, he could no longer hold back and he broke down in tears and sobs of his own.

He cried for everyone in Derry, for the children who had been murdered and their heartbroken and grief-stricken families, for Otis Worthington, an innocent and gentle soul who had been wrongfully accused and driven to suicide by the wickedness of his peers, and most of all for Derry itself and the nightmare which had seized it like a hungry lion. As Constable Grenier continued to weep and the crowd began to join him, a low and sinister chuckle could be heard from the back of the crowd.



## **11. Chapter 10: The Weight Of The Weary**

### **Chapter 10: The Weight Of The Weary**

For over a month after Otis Worthington's suicide in the Silver Dollar tavern, the town of Derry seemed to be in a stupefied state of shock. The citizens went through their daily lives and routines as habitually as worker ants go back and forth carrying food to the queen. The people were like zombies and went through their days as creatures of habit, with no emotional connection or attachment to their friends and neighbors, stripped of their zeal for life much as a deer is skinned before being prepared and eaten. Thomas heard only bits and pieces of what had happened at the Silver Dollar, but the little that he did hear made him certain that Pennywise was involved. And what truly frightened him the most was not just what had happened, but his unexplainable inner knowledge that the incident at the Silver Dollar was only part of the brutal act of violence that was set in motion by Pennywise. He spoke with Franklin about these things at school, and he was somewhat comforted to know that Franklin had been having the same feelings of insight, almost as if the boys were being made aware of things by an outside source, things that they would have no way of knowing otherwise. It felt to them like they were being protected by some unknown force and being led safely through the fire of Pennywise's evil ways. The boys were not without their own inner turmoil and mental scars however, as the sight of the evil monster in the shape of a clown and the growing realization of its wicked ways became a burden for Thomas and Franklin.

It was a burden similar in weight to the one now carried by Constable Grenier as he tried to keep a strong and brave face in light of the sinister darkness that seemed to have taken hold of Derry. After Worthington's suicide, the Silver Dollar tavern was temporarily closed and John Markson and his mob of vigilantes had all but disappeared from the streets. But it still did nothing to ease the pain in Constable Grenier's heart, the pain he felt having to tell the aging widow Glorietta Worthington that her son was dead. Even his family life as a husband and father was affected, as his sadness dulled the joy he should have felt with his wife as they welcomed the birth of their first child, a baby boy they named David.

And likewise a heavy burden had settled on the heart of John Markson, a burden that made him feel as if he was being used for someone or something else's gain, much like a two-buck whore in a brothel bedroom. He could not recall what happened that night at the tavern, only that he went there to meet an associate for a drink around 7 pm, and the next thing he remembered was standing nude in his bedroom at 3 o'clock in the morning and staring at his sleeping wife while smoking a cigar. After that incident Markson became a recluse, rarely venturing out of his house for anything and all the while being convinced that he was somehow possessed by an unknown evil force that was surely eating his sanity.

The climax of everything that had occurred in Derry for the past year and a half was set in motion, and Thomas and Franklin knew that they, like everyone else in Derry, were nothing more than mere pawns in Pennywise's sadistic and cruel game of chess. But the two boys also knew somehow that there was a rival force to Pennywise that was at work in Derry, a force of light to combat the scourge of darkness. They did not know which one of the forces would overcome the other, but they knew the conclusion of all of this was approaching like an oncoming avalanche.

## **12. Chapter 11: The Final Bell Tolls**

### **Chapter 11: The Final Bell Tolls**

One night in mid-April as Thomas sat in the floor of his room drawing a picture, he got a strange feeling in his heart that events were transpiring that were the work of Pennywise at that very moment. It was as if he could sense that something awful was taking place somewhere in Derry, and that whatever it was would be the fulfillment of Pennywise's cycle of violence. Thomas went to bed that night with a dread that made any hope of sleep a fleeting and distant wish. He knew that there would be bad news about someone in town by tomorrow, and he struggled with a burning fear that it would be someone he knew well.

The next morning he awoke and ate breakfast and started off on his routine walk with his father to the schoolhouse. When they got to the school they found the schoolmaster, Mr. Hayden, who with a grave face was informing the children and their parents that classes would be canceled for the remainder of the week. He told everyone that something else terrible had happened and that several more people from Derry were found dead that very morning. When pressed for further details, he declined comment and referred any further questions to Constable Grenier, who was investigating the incident as they spoke.

It was around 10 that morning on April 16th, 1851 as Constable Grenier stood in the front parlor of the Markson house on south Center Street and looked out the window towards the bright blue sky. He was looking outside because he felt nauseous and was worried he would feel ill if he had continued to keep his eyes on what lay behind in the parlor floor. To his back lay the bodies of the entire Markson family, who had been found this morning by a concerned neighbor who noticed that they were not up and about as was normal. When Constable Grenier arrived about a half hour later with his assistant deputy, they immediately cordoned off the house to curious neighbors and set to the grim work of the investigation. In the floor of the front parlor lay the bodies of John Markson, his wife Sarah, and their three children: James, Lucas, and Elizabeth. The bodies

were arranged on the floor in a circle, with John Markson's corpse in the middle surrounded by his deceased wife and children. Constable Grenier was greatly disturbed by the awful white smile of John Markson's face, almost giving the appearance that he was grinning. The investigation revealed that the times of death were most likely the previous evening, and it was determined that John Markson had poisoned his family with cyanide, probably by slipping it into their food just before they ate supper. After they were dead, John Markson apparently arranged the bodies in the circle and laid down in the middle, and killed himself by eating a deadly white nightshade mushroom. The whiteness of his grin turned out to be the pieces of mushroom, of which he had a large mouthful. It would have guaranteed to cause him an excruciating and agonizing death, which was what he deserved in the unspoken opinion of Constable Grenier. The crime was classified as a murder-suicide and the town mortician came to collect and remove the bodies to take to the Derry Funeral Home. And with all important evidence collected, the house was shut and locked up and the curtains were drawn closed. As Constable Grenier left the house around 3 that afternoon to return to his office to begin writing the reports of the crime, he had an odd sensation. It was almost as if a great deal of the darkness and the blanket of negativity was at that point removed from Derry. The sun seemed to shine a bit brighter and feel warmer and the air did not feel as heavy. And although he couldn't explain how or why, Constable Grenier knew somehow that the string of disappearances, murders, and violence that had pervaded Derry for almost two years was over, at least for the foreseeable future. And he felt relieved to be sure, glad to put this awful chapter of his life behind him.

Thomas also felt relief to know that the long nightmare that had torn at the fabric of Derry was at least for a while anyway, had come to an end. He felt terrible when he had heard what happened to the Markson family, knowing that their fate was the work of Pennywise and his evil ways. His inner intuition made it apparent to him that this awful act of violence that befell the Markson family was the final piece of Pennywise's twisted puzzle of death. But his intuition also made it very clear that Pennywise would certainly return and wreck havoc on Derry at some point, as he apparently had for an untold number of centuries. Thomas certainly hoped that he would not be alive when the time came for Pennywise to awaken again.

As the months went by and spring turned to summer, the people of Derry had steadily gone back to their normal way of life, free of the burden and fear that all of the death and violence had caused. And as Thomas and Franklin and the rest of the children of Derry resumed the adventure of life that were their childhoods, the memories of that awful chapter of the town's history became more and more distant in their minds. Thomas felt like he was being stripped of his memories of what had happened little by little, and Franklin told him that the same was true for him as well. Maybe it was better that they didn't remember, thought Thomas, because they were bad memories of things that had traumatized them, and that shouldn't be a burden carried by children. One memory that Thomas did hold on to was of the beautiful day in late July that his father had taken him and Franklin fishing on the banks of the Penobscot River to enjoy the warm weather. The sky was a lovely and cloudless blue and the trees were filled with singing birds and the air was filled with the smell of pine. And it was the memory of that single day that Thomas carried with him throughout the years, the memory of a boy and his father in the company of his best friend, fishing and enjoying the wonderful and precious moments offered by life.

## **13. Chapter 12: Friendship To The Last**

### **Chapter 12: Friendship To The Last**

Thomas felt himself returning to consciousness, his eyes fluttering in the brightness of sunlight, his face sticky with sweat and his hair damp and matted. He awoke to find himself laying sprawled out on his back on the ground. He was still laying wounded in the cornfield where he had fallen among his dead and dying comrades. As he blinked and adjusted his eyes to the surroundings, he was saddened to see so many of his fellow soldiers laying lifeless on the ground, many with missing limbs and shattered faces, some still clutching their muskets and others with their eyes still open but dead all the same. The bodies of the soldiers were frozen in death and strewn about in every conceivable position where they had died on the field of battle. The corn stalks had been shot to shreds by the thousands upon thousands of bullets that had been fired by the combatants on both sides. Pools and streams of blood covered the ground, resembling macabre lakes and streams of death. There was not a spot of the cornfield that was empty of dead soldiers, many clad in blue and others in gray. The stench in the air was awful, smelling like a mixture of rotten meat, feces, urine, vomit, and the stale coppery scent of blood. Flies swarmed over the corpses and no doubt soon the bodies would be the residences of fatty maggots enjoying their hearty meal of dead flesh. Thomas swallowed in his mouth and throat that was parched from lack of water and he felt blisters that caked his lips, a painful gift from the burning Maryland sun. He tried to move his legs but discovered that he had no movement or feeling below his waist. He propped himself up on his elbows and stared down to find an unpleasant sight- he had a large bullet wound above his left knee that had shattered the bone in his upper leg. The left leg of his sky blue trousers were now a deep brownish-red from his thigh to his ankle, and he could see that the flesh around the wound had already turned a sickly grayish color and was covered in squirming maggots. Thomas knew he had lost a lot of blood and he would die if he did not get to an army surgeon soon. He winced with the realization that his leg would certainly have to be amputated, and it made him wonder if it would be better to just die anyway. He thought back to his dream of remembering the events of his childhood, and he

realized that he still needed to look for Franklin.

He looked around the corpse-strewn cornfield again, hoping with everything in him that he wouldn't see Franklin among the ranks of the dead. As he looked around, he sensed someone crawling behind him and turned to see that it was his friend, thankfully alive and well. Franklin had been lightly grazed in the foot by a spent bullet but was otherwise in good condition. Thomas could see the streaks of dried tears on his friend's cheeks and he asked how the battle had been after he had passed out. Franklin looked down at him with sadness in his eyes and said, "the battle is still in progress, but a bit farther down the road near a small church now. The fight here in this damn cornfield was a draw, but I think we gave the rebs a good lickin' with all things considered. But Thomas, our regiment suffered terribly from casualties- 296 of our men were killed and wounded out of the 416 we had this morning. I briefly saw you durin' the battle, and then I saw you get shot and fall. Our lines broke a few minutes after that when the rebs advanced on us. As we retreated we passed a fresh brigade of Massachusetts men going into the fight, and I think they pushed the rebs back for a bit. That's how the battle went Thomas, both sides pushin' each other back and forth again and again. A damn waste of good men if you ask me.. anyhow on my way back towards the rear with the what was left of our regiment, I passed several other regiments who were still fresh and waitin' for orders, and one of the regiments was the 20th Maine, led by some Colonel named Chamberlain. They was just standing there with their guns shouldered and waiting, and meanwhile our boys got slaughtered. And I told as I passed by that if they was just goin' to stand around and pretend to be soldiers that they could go give water to the 23rd boys that was dyin'. Well, I don't guess they liked that, but I honestly don't give a damn. They should have been fightin' like we was.." and with that, Franklin trailed off in thought until Thomas spoke again in a weakening voice...

"I had a dream Franklin, when I was passed out- or maybe a vision- from years ago when we were children growing up in Derry... and it was a dream of that time that all of the murders and disappearances of children was going on, and you and I found out it was that clown Pennywise. Do you remember that Franklin?" He looked at Franklin and saw the dawning realization cross his friend's face, as memories

no doubt flooded back. Franklin nodded and said, "I remember, it was some kind of demon and a monster that tormented us, but lucky for us it didn't catch and kill us like it did the other kids...why are you bringin' all this back up Thomas? It's not something that I like to remember."

Thomas felt a tiredness slowly coming over himself and shrugged and said, "I don't know, maybe because you and I stuck together and stayed alive, just like we did when we joined up for this war that was supposed to be over quick. Maybe because we could have ended up like those dead children real easy, but we lived. As strong and powerful as Pennywise was and still is, and he didn't get us. I think we had some kind of guardian angel watching over us during that time. Maybe it's still protecting us now in this war." Franklin had a quizzical look on his face and asked, "what do you mean Pennywise *still* is strong and powerful? How do we really know for a fact that it will come back? And if it does, who knows how long that'll be from now?" Thomas thought about that for a moment, starting to feel weaker, and said, "well whatever happens, maybe it's our duty to not forget the terrible things we went through as children, to not forget that Pennywise is evil and that he preys on Derry, and maybe that if and when he does come back, we will have the chance to warn people about it. Make a promise to me Franklin, let's make a promise that if Pennywise does come back, we will do our part to warn people. And pass down to our loved ones about what Pennywise is and how evil its intentions are. Promise me that Franklin, that you won't forget, and I promise the same." As the two men who had been friends since they were boys clasped hands and stared at each other, both sitting on the ground, one who was weak and losing blood, the other who would not leave his side, Franklin affirmed his half of the promise to his dearest friend Thomas.

They continued their conversation, mostly small talk now, until Franklin noticed that Thomas was talking less and less. He looked down at his friend and felt his heart breaking at the sight of Thomas dying. Franklin felt fresh tears streaming down his cheeks as Thomas' breathing became more strained and his skin began to take on a whitish-gray tone that signaled that he was about to make his journey to Heaven. Franklin put his arm around Thomas and clutched his hand in his own, crying with his childhood friend. And it was



then, the two friends sitting in that cornfield in Maryland on that sunny and hot September day far away from their home in Maine, the two friends who had been through so much together, it was then and there that Thomas Vineyard died. As Franklin broke down in sobs and closed his dear friend's eyes for the last time, his heart strengthened in the resolution and affirmation of his promise.

## 14. Epilogue: A Soldier's Promise

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*Derry, Maine- 17 years later*

Franklin Denbrough sat on the front porch of his family's home on Witcham Street and looked out across the sidewalk as his 8-year old son John played with the neighbor children on this warm summer day in late July. Franklin kept a close watch on his son, as the cycle of murders and disappearances involving children in Derry had started again almost two years ago, and the pattern and circumstances of the killings made it abundantly clear that Pennywise had returned. Franklin had of course attempted to warn his fellow citizens of Derry about the danger, but it had only made him a source of derision and mockery around town. Everyone just assumed that he was nothing more than the disturbed old war veteran and that the horrors of war had made him crazy. But Franklin persisted, remembering the promise that he had made to a dying Thomas on the battlefield years ago. He carried that promise with him through all of the years since. Franklin was discharged from the Union army in late May of 1863 due to a wound he had received during the Battle of Chancellorsville. The rest of the 23rd Maine had been discharged after that battle as well, as the losses suffered by the regiment had put it far below fighting strength, and thus the regiment was disbanded and the men were sent home. Only 81 out of the original 416 men in the regiment had survived the war unhurt, and another 107 had survived with horrible physical and mental wounds from combat that would never truly heal. Most of the regiment's casualties had been suffered during the Battle of Antietam, the battle in which Thomas had been killed. The sons of Derry in 23rd Maine had fought through three major battles at Antietam, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville, and had fought for their country bravely and gallantly. Franklin returned to Derry with the rest of his fellow soldiers and tried to resume his life as best he could to what it was before the war.

Franklin had returned to find that his father and mother were in good health and wellbeing and the family farm had been well maintained

in his absence. Soon after, Franklin married a local woman he had grown up with, Lucinda Jones, and they had a family and had moved to their own home on Witcham Street. Franklin had been a steward over his responsibilities as a husband and father, but he never forgot his promise, and as such had told his family and friends everything he knew about Pennywise and about what he and Thomas had experienced as children. The stories made him somewhat of a social pariah among his friends and acquaintances, but his parents and his wife listened to him and stood by his side faithfully. And sure enough, when local children began to disappear and be found dead and mutilated again beginning almost two years ago, Franklin recalled the horrors of his childhood and took the necessary steps to protect his children from the wrath of Pennywise's evil ways.

And now here he sat on the front porch of his home on a warm July day in 1879, a war veteran with a family of his own and a pension from his service to his country, a man who would protect everyone he loved and held dear at all costs, a man who would do whatever possible to keep more children from becoming the latest victims of Pennywise. As he sat on the porch he began to think of Thomas, hoping that he had done his part to keep the promise he made to his dying friend all those years ago. And as he opened that day's newspaper and began to read of the latest incident, the murders of a group of lumberjacks who had been found torn apart in a cabin on the Upper Kenduskeag, Franklin knew that the promise he had made was not in vain. The presence of Pennywise was a disease to Derry, but Franklin knew in his heart that the disease would one day be eradicated, even if he or his children did not live to see it. As he sat on the porch and watched his son play, Franklin's mind began to drift to a happy memory from long ago, a memory of himself as a young boy, fishing with Thomas and his father on the banks of the Penobscot River, enjoying the precious moments of happiness shared between friends.

**The End**